



POOR READING CULTURE IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

Innocent Otache

Department of Business Administration and Management, Federal Polytechnic, Idah, Kogi State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *A reading society is a knowledge-based society and, by extension, a developed society. The poor reading culture in Nigeria, specifically among primary and secondary school students, has reached an alarming state. The situation needs to be urgently addressed before it gets out of hand. It is against this backdrop that this article explores the possible causes of poor reading culture among primary and secondary school students in Nigeria and the way forward. It has been discovered that the causes of poor reading culture in Nigeria include defective education system, reading language problem, lack of well-equipped or functional libraries in schools and low patronage of school libraries, among others. The article has implications for the government, the parents, the policymakers in the education sector, the educational institutions and the students on the possible ways to entrench a strong reading culture in Nigeria. This article puts forward practicable suggestions that could help entrench a strong reading culture in Nigeria. The article contributes to the debate on poor reading culture in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular.*

KEYWORDS: Reading, Reading Culture, Knowledge, Library, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The recent report by the United Nations shows that about 250 million children in the world cannot read and write (UNICEF, 2015). And of that figure, 130 million of them have actually attended school. This implies that the issue of illiteracy, which is strongly related to poor reading culture, has become a global challenge, although it is more prevalent in developing countries than in developed countries. The United Nations reported that one out of every four young people in developing countries cannot read (Provost, 2014). In that regard, the African continent is the most threatened because reading is not deeply rooted in the socio-cultural set up in most of the African countries. The African society is not a reading society, but a chatting or an oral society (Nalusiba, 2010). As an oral society, information is mostly passed by word of mouth. African people prefer conversing to reading. Besides, most of the African people do not see reading as a leisure activity, but as work.

A great deal of literature has reported the prevailing poor reading culture in Africa. For instance, there is a prevalence of poor reading culture in Kenya, just as there is in Uganda and Rwanda (Nalusiba, 2010; Onyango *et al.*, 2015; Otiike, 2011; Ruterana, 2012). In Zambia and Nigeria, the story is not different (Haliru *et al.*, 2015; Kayuni, 2017). In Tanzania and Botswana, the situation is not better (Akande and Adeniyinka, 2007; Kumburu, 2011). The reading culture in Africa is so poor that a certain white man once said, and I quote, “if you want to hide anything from an African, put it in a book”. What he means is that a typical African does not read. The white man may have greatly exaggerated the poor reading culture problem



in Africa in his submission, but one cannot agree less with him given a plethora of literature and statistics confirming the prevalence of poor reading culture in most of the African countries. On the whole, most of the African countries are currently battling with the problem of poor reading culture with the exception of Egypt and South Africa among others that seem to be winning the battle against the menace of poor reading culture.

A review of the existing literature has acknowledged the prevalence of poor reading culture in Nigeria. To be more specific, the poor reading culture among primary and secondary school students in Nigeria has reached an alarming state. It is not surprising, therefore, that Nigeria has the highest number of children who have dropped out of school. Of the 20 million children who were out-of-school worldwide in 2017, 10.5 million of them were from Nigeria (Umoru, 2017). It is quite disheartening to see some secondary school students who cannot read simple sentences. Of more worrisome is the fact that there are some students in the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education who cannot read fluently. If one cannot read fluently, how can one understand what one is reading? It takes a good reader to comprehend what he or she is reading. To proof further the prevalence of poor reading culture in Nigeria, a review of the extant literature shows that about 30 million people have graduated from secondary school with poor reading culture (Aina *et al.*, 2011; Kayuni, 2017). Also, available statistics shows that about 40% of Nigerian adults never finish reading a play or a novel from cover to cover after leaving school (Aina *et al.*, 2011; Kayuni, 2017).

The effects of poor reading culture are enormous. Poor reading culture has negative effects on the society and the individual. At the societal level, it creates knowledge gap and retards development. Similarly, a society with poor reading culture is bound to have leadership crises because of dearth of knowledgeable leaders. At the individual level, poor reading culture impedes personal development and success in life. It has killed and imprisoned a lot of people because they have refused to read warning signs or instructions. It is the reason why many students are not performing well academically in schools today (Akong, 2014). Poor reading culture equally breeds poverty. The difference between the rich and the poor is nothing but knowledge and its rightful application (Onyango *et al.*, 2015). Likewise, the difference between a successful person and a failure is knowledge. Overall, poor reading culture widens the gap between ignorance and knowledge in the society.

Although, this article addresses broadly the poor reading culture in Nigeria, the main purpose of the article is to explore the possible causes of poor reading culture among primary and secondary school students and the way forward. The article argues that it is the poor reading culture among primary and secondary school students in Nigeria (which had built up over the years) that has degenerated into or assumed a full-blown countrywide poor reading culture. It is believed that once the challenge of poor reading culture among primary and secondary school students is tackled, by implication, the problem of poor reading culture in Nigeria will be resolved considerably in the long run. Besides, it is wise to inculcate reading culture into the children at their early stage so that when they become adults they will be used to reading (Akande and Adenyinka, 2007; Ukoha, 2015). To put it differently, early exposure of children to reading makes them to see reading as a natural thing.



READING AND READING CULTURE

Reading has attracted a plethora of definitions. Reading is defined as the ability to interpret and decode an array of words through a cognitive process (Ayoti, 2015; Enamen, 2015). It is the complex act of dealing with communication in written or visual form (Ogwu, 2010). According to the Wikipedia Online Dictionary, reading is defined “as a complex process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning” (Haliru *et al.*, 2015). It is an act of interpreting meaning from written words (Akande and Adeyinka, 2007; Nalusiba, 2010). Reading is a learning skill which aids all other learning activities (Nalusiba, 2010). To put it simply, reading is the activity of someone who reads. To read is to look at and understand the meaning of written words or symbols (Aina *et al.*, 2011; Ogugua *et al.*, 2015).

Different people read for different reasons. While some people read to acquire knowledge for self-improvement, others read for pleasure, relaxation or entertainment. Some others read to pass examinations.

Reading is a skill, which must be consciously developed and nurtured. One needs to read, read and read. As a matter of fact, one needs to read anything one can lay one's hands on. One needs to read until words become one's friends. The more one reads, the more the reading skill develops. There is a saying that “continuous reading brings about brain automatism”.

Reading enhances one's writing skill. Naturally, reading precedes writing. For example, a child first learns how to read before he or she learns how to write. Additionally, reading improves one's spoken language. It enables one to learn every part of a language like vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar. The more one reads books that are written in a particular language, the more fluent one becomes in that language.

Reading is a habit which must be formed. It is a culture that must be developed. While habit is an acquired behavioural pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary and occurs automatically (Orakpor, 2012), culture refers to the way of life of a particular group of people (Ogugua *et al.*, 2015). Reading habit or culture, therefore, is defined as an act of engaging in reading on a regular basis (Enamen, 2015). It is a learned practice of seeking knowledge or information through the written words or symbols. It is also defined as a culture where reading is part of people's living and constitutes a habit that is shared by members of the society (Ruterana, 2012). Reading culture is an act of reading as a usual practice or pattern of behaviour (Orakpor, 2012). It is equally defined as the way of life of people which is characterized by the habit of reading intensively and extensively (Nalusiba, 2010). In a nutshell, reading culture is a dedicated and consistent reading lifestyle (Enamen, 2015).

To develop a reading culture, one has to make reading to be part of one's everyday life. It is not a one-off reading. It even goes beyond one's ability to read. It is about reading habitually. It is also not reading because one is in school and possibly wants to pass an examination. Reading should be seen as a leisure activity if a strong reading culture must be developed. Developing a strong reading culture does not happen overnight; it takes quality time, dedication and consistency.

Related literature has acknowledged that a strong reading culture is beneficial to the individual and the nation (Ogugua *et al.*, 2015). At the individual level, reading improves one's writing, reasoning and communication skills. It improves one's expertise, self-esteem or self-confidence and vocabulary. It is an essential skill that everyone needs to be successful in life.



It is a great investment for self-development. Reading, needless to say, makes a man. At the national level, reading, which involves acquisition of knowledge, is strongly related to national development, whether educational, social, political, economic, cultural or technological. Knowledge is widely regarded as the driver of economic growth and productivity. People acquire knowledge through reading and that puts them in positions to contribute meaningfully to the development of their nation. It has been argued that nations whose citizens are well-read develop faster than those whose citizens are not well-read. In other words, the level of literacy of people of a country determines the pace of development of the country. To put it simply, a reading nation is a knowledge-based nation and, by extension, a developed nation.

READING AND KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is generally regarded as the compass of life. It is very important in every aspect of human life. In life generally, without knowledge, one cannot achieve success. Likewise, it is impossible for one to make informed decisions without knowledge. "Knowledge is power", as the saying goes. By definition, knowledge is information acquired through reading of books and experience. On the other hand, ignorance is lack of knowledge. Reading bridges the gap between ignorance and knowledge (Haliru *et al.*, 2015). In other words, reading helps us to remove the darkness of ignorance. Ignorance kills. Ignorance is a disease and it even kills faster than some known deadly diseases like Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). There is a saying that "if you think education is expensive - try ignorance". We all know that one needs to spend a lot of money to be educated or knowledgeable, but it is more costly to be ignorant. In that regard, it is wise for one to empty one's pocket to buy and read good books in order to fill one's head with knowledge so that the head, in turn, would fill back one's pocket with money.

It can be deduced from the above that reading and knowledge are closely related. Knowledge is gained through reading. Impliedly, one reads to acquire knowledge or learn. In other words, one reads to be informed. A reader is an informed person and if one is not informed, one would be deformed. Similarly, if one is deformed, one would not be able to perform and make any meaningful decision in life. Reading is a basic tool in the living of a good life and knowledge is what everyone needs to be successful in life.

Even the holy books (the Bible and the Koran) underscore the importance of reading and knowledge. The Bible in Hosea 4:6 says "My people perish for lack of knowledge". Also, Jesus, replying the Pharisees when they came to tempt him in Matthew 19:3-4, says, and I quote, "Have you not read ...". In Matthew 22: 23-31, Jesus also emphasizes the importance of reading when the Sadducees sought to know something about the resurrection. The Koran equally emphasizes the significance of reading and knowledge. *Iqra* is the first revelation from Allah to Prophet Mohammed (SAW). *Iqra* means "to read". In Islam, to seek knowledge is a sacred duty, meaning that it is compulsory for every Muslim to seek knowledge. The Koran even enjoins the Muslims to "seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave". To seek knowledge, both the Christians and the Muslims are enjoined to read their respective holy books always. Similarly, the African traditionalists (the native doctors) appreciate the significance of reading. The native doctors claim that there is a traditional medicine (or charm) that can make students to remember. But the question is, what are they remembering? Of course, what they have read. This implies that they must first read what they want to remember. Definitely, the charm that makes a student to form a reading habit must be a good one.



Poor reading culture erodes knowledge. According to Peter Drucker, “knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly, or it vanishes”. The day one stops reading, that is the day one stops learning and even the knowledge one has acquired will elude one. It should be noted that knowledge can be outdated. However, the good thing is that the same outdated knowledge can be updated, but through reading.

Quotations About Reading and Knowledge

Below are some famous and thought-provoking quotations about reading and knowledge. They are meant to spur one to develop a strong interest in reading.

- ✚ “Reading is to the mind; what exercise is to the body” (Joseph Addison).
- ✚ “A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies, but the man who never reads lives only one” (George R. R. Martin).
- ✚ “Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are” (Mason Cooley).
- ✚ “Reading takes us away from home, but more important, it finds homes for us everywhere” (Hazel Rochman).
- ✚ “An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest” (Benjamin Franklin).
- ✚ “Nothing is better than reading and gaining more and more knowledge” (Stephen Hawking).
- ✚ “Reading is important, because if you can read, you can learn anything about everything and everything about anything” (Tomie dePaola).
- ✚ “The things I want to know are in books. My best friend is the man who will get me a book I have never read” (Abraham Lincoln).
- ✚ “There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them” (Ray Bradbury).
- ✚ “A man is but what he knows” (Francis Bacon).

NIGERIA AND READING CULTURE

Nigeria is one of the countries in the western part of Africa. It was colonized by the British. Nigeria became independent on 1st October, 1960. Presently, it is broadly divided into six geopolitical zones and 36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja being the headquarters. It is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural country. As a multi-ethnic country, Nigeria can boast of over 250 ethnic groups and languages. Being a country that is colonized by the British and given its multilingual nature, English language is adopted as the lingua franca and the official language. Although, English language is the official language, *Hausa*, *Ibo* and *Yoruba* are the three Nigeria’s indigenous languages that are officially approved to be taught as subjects in schools nationwide.

Like many other African societies, the Nigerian society is an oral society with a rich oral tradition. As noted earlier, the African society is not a reading society. Likewise, the Nigerian



society is not a reading society. Nonetheless, the reading culture started developing in Nigeria with the coming of the Arabs and the European missionaries who saw the need to teach people how to read and write with a view to facilitating the propagation of their own religious agenda. The advent of the colonial masters who introduced English and education also contributed in no small measure to the development of reading culture in Nigeria. It is worthy of note that Nigerians in the olden days developed a reading culture, even though it was not strong, as they were buying and reading literature books and newspapers. The reading culture grew to the extent that some Nigerians were even inspired into writing literary works, with some of them rising to become giants in the literary world. Notable among Nigerian writers are: Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Bode Sowande, Wole Soyinka (a Nobel laureate), Elechi Amadi, Ola Rotimi, J. P. Clark, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Gabriel Okara, Sefi Atta and Zulu Sofola among others.

The last two decades had witnessed a sharp deterioration in the reading culture among Nigerians. In the olden days, Nigerians made reading one of their hobbies, but nowadays, reading is no longer regarded as a hobby. It has even been noted that Nigerians no longer buy and read literature books and newspapers as they used to do in the olden days. In the same way, there is an obvious contrast between the quality of literature books that are written by the present and the early Nigerian authors. Comparatively, the quality of literature books that are written nowadays compared to those that were written in the olden days has dropped significantly. Although, there are still some Nigerian authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chigozie Obioma whose great works of literature are currently soaring very high in the literary world.

There is no doubt that poor reading culture has impacted negatively on Nigeria in the areas of development and leadership. Nigeria is not developing as it should and there are leadership crises at all levels of the government. Unfortunately, Nigeria is still a developing nation after 56 years of independence despite the fact that it is endowed with abundant human and natural resources. Presently, it cannot boast of having the likes of Tafawa Balewa, Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe among others in various leadership positions. These were the past Nigerian leaders who were well-read, possessed sterling leadership qualities and excelled in various leadership positions they occupied. It is worth noting that great leaders are good readers. Additionally, it has been argued that a reading society is a knowledge-based society and, by extension, a developed society. The Nigerian nation is not a reading nation and so it cannot be regarded as a knowledge-based nation, which is why it is not developing as it should.

It should be noted that efforts have been made to develop the reading culture in Nigeria. The Nigerian government has established a National Library with its branches in some states with a view to promoting reading culture in Nigeria. The National Library of Nigeria has equally launched a *Readership Promotion Campaign* in order to create awareness about the importance of reading. More so, the Federal Government, in recent times, came up with the *Bring Back the Book* initiative (Akindele, 2012). The *Bring Back the Book* initiative was meant to promote book reading among Nigerians, especially among the youths. Despite all these efforts, it is sad to note that the reading culture in Nigeria is still declining, suggesting that a lot more need to be done. The recent World Culture Score Index rated Nigeria as one of the countries in the world with the lowest reading culture (Agbakwuru, 2017). A lot of people have attributed the prevailing poor reading culture in Nigeria to a number of factors. Some of these factors will be discussed shortly.



POSSIBLE CAUSES OF POOR READING CULTURE

Developing a strong reading culture is a function of many factors. Likewise, a poor reading culture is caused by a multiplicity of factors. In that regard, the following factors have been identified to be responsible for the poor reading culture among primary and secondary school students in Nigeria.

Defective Education System: The Nigeria's education system does not prioritize reading for general acquisition of knowledge. Rather, it prioritizes reading for passing examinations. The education system in Nigeria can be best described as an examination-oriented education system. Under the circumstances, students are taught to the test, and consequently, most students read to pass examinations. Some students have even resorted to quoting (or cramming) in order to pass examinations and then, to make matters worse, some teachers want their students to write verbatim in examinations. This is a wrong approach to reading and it does not help one or a society to develop a strong reading culture. It means that one does not need to read if there are no examinations to be written. The implication is that such students will pass the examinations, even very well, but the knowledge is not there. Ask such students questions about the same examinations that they had passed. You will be surprised that they will not be able give you the correct answers. As students, the major focus when reading should be to acquire knowledge. And with the knowledge acquired, passing examinations becomes easy. An examination-oriented type of reading forces students to read prescribed textbooks only and this does not help them to develop a strong reading culture. After all, the debate on whether examination is the true test of knowledge has not been concluded.

Reading language Problem: The problem of reading language affects reading culture, particularly in a multilingual society like Nigeria. The question is, in what language context is literacy defined in Nigeria? Of course, literacy is defined in the context of English language. But literacy should not be defined in the context of English language only. It should be noted that literacy is one's ability to read and write in any language, whether English, French or Yoruba. Although, the official language in Nigeria is English, there are more than 250 indigenous languages in Nigeria. But it is informative to point out that *Hausa, Ibo* and *Yoruba* are the three Nigerian indigenous languages that are officially approved to be taught as subjects in schools nationwide. One of the major challenges we face in Nigeria is that many people cannot read and write in their native languages aside from the fact that there is a dearth of books written in indigenous languages. To compound the problem is the fact that many Nigerians are not proficient in English language. Hence, the poor reading culture in Nigeria. Reading language is important when we talk about developing a strong reading culture. Developing a reading culture becomes a problem, especially when one cannot read and write either in his or her native language or in the lingua franca, English language. In Nigeria, many children usually learn to speak in their mother tongue before they get to school, even though many of them may not be able to read and write in their mother tongue. The problem begins when the children get to school and they are introduced to English language. Instead of teaching them how to read and write in their mother tongue which they already learnt how to speak, they are taught how to read and write in English language, which they are not used to at home. And that is where their dilemma lies. In such a situation, developing a reading culture becomes problematic.

Lack of Well-Equipped libraries: A great deal of existing literature has attributed the poor reading culture in most of the African countries to the non-existence of functional libraries (Anyaegebu *et al.*, 2016). Most primary and secondary schools in Nigeria do not have functional



libraries. Some actually have a building that is labelled *Library*, but without books and library personnel. In some cases, where libraries exist, they are stocked with outdated books or reading materials.

Low Patronage of School Libraries: Most students do not go to the libraries these days to read or do their assignments. Some students go to the library, but for the wrong reason. At best, some students only go the library to write or copy notes, which ordinarily should not be the main reason for one to go to the library. All these do not help one or a society to develop a strong reading culture.

Reading is Not Prioritized: Most students do not prioritize reading, *let alone* developing a strong reading culture. They devote little or no time to reading. But the question is, what do they spend their time on?

- a) Some are always with their mobile phones, on the Internet and specifically on the social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. To some extent, social networking affects negatively one's reading culture. Most students now spend most of their time on social media platforms chatting and networking.
- b) Others engage in playing video games.
- c) Some others spend their time watching films or videos and listening to music.

It is worth noting that the time spent on the above activities, if invested in reading, is enough to enable one or a society to develop a strong reading culture.

Poor Quality Teachers: It is very unfortunate that some primary and secondary school teachers cannot read fluently. Strikingly, a particular state Governor in Nigeria (names of the Governor and the state withheld) once conducted a screening exercise for the teachers and it was discovered that a particular teacher could not read an affidavit. This is quite pathetic considering the fact that, to a large extent, the quality of the teachers determines the quality of the students. Teachers are role models to their students. If teachers cannot read fluently, how can their students read fluently?

Poverty: Poverty is also responsible for the prevailing poor reading culture in Nigeria. Developing a reading culture is more than buying and reading just a book and reading it repeatedly; it entails buying and reading as many books or reading materials as possible and it costs a lot of money. Available records show that most Nigerians are living below the poverty line. Put differently, a vast majority of Nigerians are living in abject poverty. Some parents cannot pay their children's school fees, let alone buying books for them to read. Other parents cannot even afford a square meal. Currently, the national minimum wage is less than \$55 and the cost of living is high. Definitely, it becomes difficult, if not totally impossible, for many Nigerians who desire to read to buy books. Can someone who eats food once in a day think of buying books to read? Where one does not have money to buy books to read, developing a reading culture becomes difficult.

Decision to Indulge in Examination Malpractice: The decision to indulge in examination malpractice affects one's reading culture. The moment a student decides to indulge in examination malpractice, the zeal to read would immediately disappear and reading would no longer make any meaning to him or her. Examination malpractice happens in different ways.



In some cases, questions are leaked by the teachers or appropriate authorities to the students. In other cases, parents hire experts to write examinations for their children. In most cases, students themselves intentionally engage in examination misconduct by going into the examination halls with carefully prepared materials or by copying from other students in examinations. On the whole, whichever form of examination malpractice one is involved in, it does not allow one to develop a strong reading culture.

Overemphasis on Certificates: Overemphasis on certificates instead of knowledge and skills breeds poor reading culture. It does not make reading worthwhile. Besides, it will only make people to resort to obtaining certificates through shoddy deals. In Nigeria today, in terms of quality, some olden days primary school-leavers are better than some present-day secondary school-leavers. It has even been argued that many Nigerian graduates only possess paper qualifications without requisite knowledge and skills. In a society where undue importance is attached to certificates above knowledge acquisition, developing a strong reading culture becomes unattainable.

General Attitude of the Government to Education: The general attitude of the government to education is also responsible for the poor reading culture in Nigeria. To put it bluntly, the Nigerian government does not take the education of the citizens seriously. For example, the Federal Government's budget allocation in 2017 to education is about 8% of the entire budget. This is far less than the 26% benchmark set by UNESCO. Public schools are not well funded. The right learning environment is not provided. Public schools are always on strike and, as a result, they no longer have a school calendar, let alone following it. Besides, teachers are not well taken care of. Aside from the fact that teachers are not paid promptly, their take home pay can barely take them home. In short, teachers are inadequately and inequitably remunerated in Nigeria. It is only in Africa, specifically in Nigeria, that one hears: "teachers' reward is in heaven". Teachers should be adequately taken care of so that they can in turn properly take care of the students. It should be pointed out that high quality education, high literacy rate and strong reading culture are strongly linked. In a society where there is a low-quality education and literacy rate, it will be difficult to develop a strong reading culture.

THE WAY FORWARD

As stated earlier, poor reading culture has negative effects on the society and the individual. It has been noted that poor reading culture creates knowledge gap in the society and retards development. At the individual level, poor reading culture impedes self-improvement and success in life. Thus, in view of the negative effects of poor reading culture on the society and the individual, the prevalent poor reading culture in Nigeria needs to be urgently addressed before the situation gets out of hand. To this end, the government, the schools, the parents and the students have a critical role to play in order to entrench a strong reading culture in Nigeria. Even non-governmental organizations and associations have a vital role to play.

The Role of the Government:

- ✚ The Nigerian government should address the problem of reading language. In that regard, the Federal Government should formulate a policy or make a law that will make it compulsory for primary and secondary school students to study one of the major languages in Nigeria. The policy or the law should stipulate that students must pass one



indigenous language in addition to English language at credit level in West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) before they can gain admission into any of the higher institutions in Nigeria. Resolving the reading language problem in Nigeria will help the students to develop a strong reading culture. It has been argued that the more literate students are in their native language, the more literate they will become in the foreign language they are learning, particularly in a multilingual country like Nigeria.

- ✚ The Nigeria's education system needs to be restructured from being an examination-oriented education system to a knowledge-oriented education system. The Nigeria's education system should de-emphasize the importance attached to certificates and grades. Rather, the education system should focus more on knowledge and skills acquisition.
- ✚ Government should integrate reading into the school curriculum, especially at the primary education level. It has been argued that early exposure of children to reading makes them to be used to it when they become adults.
- ✚ Government at all levels should promote reading culture. Government can do this by launching *Readership Promotion Campaign* to sensitize the masses about the importance of reading. Government can also organize interschool reading competition for primary and secondary school students. Best schools and students should be adequately rewarded. Government can also donate books to schools.
- ✚ Government should establish standard public libraries. Not everybody has access to school libraries. In most cases, school libraries are highly restricted to students. Also, not all schools have functional libraries. Therefore, establishment of public libraries will afford those people who are not in school and students whose schools do not have functional libraries the opportunity to access books or reading materials and this will help to promote reading culture. In Nigeria, we have a National Library, however, not all the states have a branch of the National Library. Appropriate authority must make efforts to establish a branch of the National Library in all the states of the federation. The state and the local governments must not be left out in the establishment of public libraries.
- ✚ Government should ensure that teachers are well trained. In fact, there is the need for training and retraining of teachers with a view to enhancing their quality. Similarly, the employment of teachers should be based strictly on merit to ensure that only qualified teachers are employed.

The Role of the Schools:

- ✚ Schools should establish functional libraries. The discussion on reading culture cannot be complete without acknowledging the critical role of libraries. Libraries help in promoting reading culture (Aina *et al.*, 2011; Ogwu, 2010). They help to stimulate and develop people's interest in reading. A library is a building which houses a collection of reading materials such as books, newspapers and CDs for people to read. Libraries are repositories of information or knowledge. A functional library, therefore, is a library that is well equipped with modern books and manned by qualified personnel. One of the challenges faced by many schools for not building a standard library is lack of funds.



The government can provide special intervention funds to schools mainly for the purpose of building a standard library.

- ✚ Schools should make it compulsory for students to read a given number of literature books in a term. In that regard, a forum such as book club should be created by schools where students will have the opportunity to relate the stories, they have read in a book with one another.
- ✚ Schools should make it compulsory for students to go to the library to do some reading or assignments. Schools should create a reading hour in the timetable when students are expected to go to the library to read.
- ✚ Schools should organize reading competition. More specifically, schools can organize interclass reading competition. The best readers should be rewarded handsomely either in cash or in kind to motivate them and others.
- ✚ Students should not be allowed to use phones, especially browse-able phones, while in school. This is to help prevent them from spending their time on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp which have taken most of their time today.

The Role of the Parents:

- ✚ Parents need to encourage their children to develop a positive attitude towards reading. To this end, parents should include in their budgets reading materials for their children. Parents can buy short story books for their children to read at home.
- ✚ Parents themselves are encouraged to read at home, no matter how tight is their schedule. This is important because the reading behaviours of parents will rub off on their children. Parents can even develop the attitudes of reading to their children.
- ✚ Parents should not buy phones, particularly browse-able phones for their children who are in primary and secondary school. This is to prevent them from spending their time on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. On the whole, parents should monitor how their children spend their time at home.

The Role of the Students:

- ✚ Students must prioritize reading by developing positive attitudes towards it. To this end, they should see reading as natural as play. They should make reading their hobby.
- ✚ They should devote their time to reading good literature books instead of spending it on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp; playing video games; listening to music; and watching films or videos.

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations and Others:

- ✚ Non-governmental organizations, business organizations, clubs and associations, as part of their social responsibilities, should donate books to school or public libraries. Wealthy Nigerians can also donate books to school or public libraries.
- ✚ They should sensitize the public about the significance of reading. They can launch book reading campaign in order to promote reading culture.



- ✚ They should equally organize interschool reading competition, particularly between schools in their localities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has critically examined the poor reading culture in Nigeria, the possible causes and the way forward. From the discussion, it can be concluded that there is a widespread poor reading culture in Nigeria. The article has argued that it is the poor reading culture among primary and secondary school students in Nigeria, which had accumulated over the years that has degenerated into or assumed a full-blown countrywide poor reading culture. The article has equally argued that the poor reading culture in Nigeria, especially among primary and secondary school students, is caused by a multiplicity of factors. On a positive note, it is believed that once the challenge of poor reading culture among primary and secondary school students is tackled, by implication, the problem of poor reading culture in Nigeria would be resolved considerably in the long run.

It is acknowledged that a strong reading culture is beneficial to the individual and the society. This article recognizes that poor reading culture erodes knowledge and a reading society is a knowledge-based society and, by extension, a developed society.

On the part of the primary and secondary school students, they are implored to develop positive attitudes towards reading. They should dedicate quality time to reading good literature books instead of spending their time on video games, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. On the part of the government, parents and schools, they all have the responsibility to ensure that a strong reading culture is entrenched in Nigeria.

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